

# Kent Academic Repository

## Full text document (pdf)

### Citation for published version

Cottee, Simon (2010) Mind slaughter: The neutralizations of jihadi salafism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33 (4). pp. 330-352. ISSN 1057-610X.

### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10576101003587176>

### Link to record in KAR

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/35748/>

### Document Version

UNSPECIFIED

#### Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

#### Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

#### Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

[researchsupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupport@kent.ac.uk)

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

This article was downloaded by: [University of Kent]

On: 29 October 2013, At: 04:33

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Studies in Conflict & Terrorism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uter20>

### Mind Slaughter: The Neutralizations of Jihadi Salafism

Simon Cottee<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Social Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd, Wales, UK

Published online: 09 Mar 2010.

**To cite this article:** Simon Cottee (2010) Mind Slaughter: The Neutralizations of Jihadi Salafism, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33:4, 330-352, DOI: [10.1080/10576101003587176](https://doi.org/10.1080/10576101003587176)

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576101003587176>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

## Mind Slaughter: The Neutralizations of *Jihadi* Salafism

SIMON COTTEE

School of Social Sciences  
Bangor University  
Bangor, Gwynedd, Wales, UK

*This article focuses on the neutralizations of the jihadi Salafi ideology. It is divided into three parts. The first describes the various rhetorical accounts that ordinary people use to neutralize conventional moral controls against inhumane conduct. The second traces how these accounts inform and drive the jihadi Salafi worldview. The third, and concluding, part of the article sketches out the policy implications of the analysis set out here, arguing that any attempt to derail the global Salafi jihad must critically undermine the core neutralizations of the jihadi Salafi ideology, since it is these which enable jihadi combatants to escape conventional moral constraints and perpetrate acts of inhumanity.*

### Introduction: *How*, Not *Why*

This article is not concerned with the “root” or underlying causes of terrorist activity. That is, it does not wish to examine the complex of motivations and emotions that prompt people to engage in terrorism: not because it thinks that the motivations and emotions that animate terrorist actions are unimportant or uninteresting—quite the contrary—but because its concerns lie elsewhere: in, specifically, *how* or *in what ways* people enable themselves, by means of various rhetorical accounts, to engage in acts of terrorism. Thus this article primarily focuses on the social activity of *account-making*: on how people publicly explain their actions, the actions of others, and the world around them. Accounts are “out there,”<sup>1</sup> so to speak, and can be readily identified in the pronouncements and thinking of those who make them. They can be seen at work and are amenable to sociological analysis.<sup>2</sup> This article, in particular, is concerned to look at the rhetorical accounts embedded in the *jihadi* Salafi worldview—at the range of symbolic resources that enable *jihadi* combatants to perform acts of extreme violence.

Contrary to the common assumption that terrorists are “mindless,”<sup>3</sup> terrorist actors<sup>4</sup> are in fact characteristically self-reflective, and invest great energy into constructing their violence as legitimate or morally imperative. Whatever it is that causes people to engage in terrorism, the intention to kill and maim for political purposes is *chosen*, and the choice itself is strongly informed by moral arguments and reasons, however misconceived or

Received 22 March 2009; accepted 8 July 2009.

For reading and commenting on a draft of this article, the author is extremely grateful to Bruce Hoffman and the two anonymous reviewers.

Address correspondence to Simon Cottee, Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice, Bangor University, School of Social Sciences, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2DG, Wales. E-mail: s.r.cottee@bangor.ac.uk

hallucinatory. One of the central contentions of this article is that, *wherever* the causes of terrorism may ultimately lie, the act of killing, maiming, and terrorizing innocent people is *enabled* by a framework of justifying and mitigating narratives. These narratives exist, and are often supported, in the wider cultures in which terrorists live. Without recourse to them, terrorists would be greatly stymied, unable to neutralize or deflect the full weight of civilized morality bearing down on them. This is not to downgrade, still less to deny, the causal centrality of motives and the emotions in the etiology of terrorist activity. The point, rather, is that in order to commit terrorist acts, terrorists must act *upon* their motive or desire to carry them out, and that in acting upon their motive or desire to engage in terrorist activity they must *neutralize* the moral constraints on doing evil or inhumane acts.<sup>5</sup> Understanding how they try to do this is therefore an important part of the wider causal picture of terrorist behavior.

Using the work of the social psychologist Albert Bandura, the aim in what follows will be to describe the various justifying and mitigating narratives that people use to overcome moral controls. The article shall then try to show how these narratives inform, or are at work in, the ideology of *jihadi* Salafism.

### Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement

Drawing on a wide range of sources from a variety of disciplines,<sup>6</sup> Bandura describes the mechanisms, psychological and social, by which ordinary and typically law-abiding people can bring themselves, or be brought by others, to commit inhumane acts.<sup>7</sup>

Bandura's analysis is based on the following assumptions: that in the course of socialization "people adopt moral standards that serve as guides and deterrents for conduct";<sup>8</sup> that they apply these standards to how they act and punish themselves when they fail to live up to them; and that the application of moral standards and hence the exercise of self-sanctions is a *selective* process and depends on how the agent construes the circumstances in which they find themselves. Bandura's central contention is that certain mechanisms exist that serve to temporarily prize or, in Bandura's phrase, *disengage* internal moral control from destructive behavior, thus facilitating agents to commit acts that they would otherwise find reprehensible. Specifically, internal moral control can be disengaged by, variously, "reconstructing conduct as serving moral purposes, by obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, by disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequences of one's actions, or by blaming and dehumanizing the victims."<sup>9</sup> Bandura's main concern is to describe these various "psychosocial mechanisms of moral disengagement" and to analyze how they "operate in the execution of inhumanities."

### Moral Justification

One of the most powerful mechanisms for disengaging moral control is *cognitive reconstruction*: if agents can convince themselves that their inhumane or destructive actions are morally right or imperative, they can perform them without moral inhibition; indeed they may even come to view their actions with unrepentant self-satisfaction and pride. Through moral sanction of violent means people are able to

see themselves as fighting ruthless oppressors who have an unquenchable appetite for conquest, protecting their cherished values and way of life, preserving world peace, saving humanity from subjugation to an evil ideology, and honoring their country's international commitments. . . . Over the years, much

reprehensible and destructive conduct has been perpetrated by ordinary, decent people in the name of religious principles, righteous ideologies, and nationalistic imperatives. Throughout history, countless people have suffered at the hands of self-righteous crusaders bent on stamping out what they consider evil.<sup>10</sup>

Stamping out criminality and vice in particular has served as an especially potent pretext for consigning countless numbers to their graves. By portraying people as guilty of some terrible deed, killing them can be accomplished without remorse and their deaths can be framed as an act of *justice*, not murder.

The idea that killing is legitimate—an act of necessity or justice—not only enables combatants to kill without remorse, but can also engender a kind of blood-lust, where the killing becomes a truly joyous and pleasurable experience. “I really loved fucking killing, couldn’t get enough” is how one Vietnam soldier put it, reflecting on how the desire for avenging the deaths of his fallen comrades had transformed him.<sup>11</sup> This, presumably, is what the novelist Martin Amis has in mind when he refers to the “irresistible combination of rectitude and violence.”<sup>12</sup> Once infused with righteousness, violence can be *enjoyed* and knows no limits. *Corruptio optimi pessima*: no greater cruelty will be devised than by those who are sure, or are assured, that they are doing good.

### ***Denial of Personal Agency***

Responsibility for inhumanities can either be “displaced” or “diffused.” Regarding the former, agents view their actions as “springing from the dictates of authorities rather than from their own violation,” and are thus “spared self-prohibiting reactions.”<sup>13</sup> Nazi prison governors and their staffs, for example, could feel relatively serene about their murderous actions, since they were simply “obeying orders,” and were thus not personally responsible for the deaths of innocents.<sup>14</sup> The participants in the My Lai massacre similarly claimed that they were “only” doing what they had been told, and thus did not experience feelings of guilt.<sup>15</sup> Lieutenant William L. Calley, the archetypal “ordinary executioner” (short, podgy, middle-class) wrote in his autobiographical account of the massacre, *Body Count*, that “personally, I didn’t kill any Vietnamese that day: I mean personally. I represented the United States of America. My country.”<sup>16</sup> Another Vietnam veteran reflected that he had done a few things he “shouldn’t have. . . . But as I sit here I say I never did anythin’ wrong other than obey my country’s orders. I never did anythin’ bad personally.”<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the “diffusion” of responsibility, agents can readily perpetrate inhumanities if they come to believe that their own personal contribution is negligible or only partially related to the eventual outcome. Acts of inhumanity are consequently far more likely to occur in a group context, since in groups no single person feels responsible for what happens. When everyone is responsible, no one is really responsible. Large bureaucracies are especially hospitable environments for perpetrating inhumanities, since the tasks performed by their members are subdivided and in themselves seem harmless. Functionaries shift their attention from the meaning of what they are doing to the details of their specific jobs.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Disregard or Distortion of Consequences***

If the human costs of destructive behavior can be *avoided*, *minimized*, or *disbelieved*, moral control can be disengaged easily. For example: killing at a distance is much easier than at close range, since the terror and suffering of the victim cannot be seen or heard. David Grossman recounts John Keegan’s view that bayonet combat is extremely rare in

military history, and writes that soldiers feel a “profound revulsion” toward its “intimate brutality.”<sup>19</sup> Of deliberate “knife kills,” Grossman observes that they are nearly always carried out from behind, precisely because “the face and all its messages and contortions are not seen.”<sup>20</sup> This, too, explains why the victims of executions and beheadings are nearly always blindfolded or hooded.

The mechanized weapons systems of contemporary warfare dramatically enhance the possibilities for inhumanities, since they enable killing at a *vast* physical distance. The howling, the severed limbs, and the stench of excrement and blood: all of this can remain reassuringly abstract in the mind of the twenty-first-century soldier. Joanna Bourke writes of a “strong correlation between altitude and guilt,” and reports that in World War II B-52 pilots and crews were “less liable to experience remorse than men on fighter-bomber missions who, in turn, were less guilt-ridden than men flying helicopter gunships where the victims were clearly visible.”<sup>21</sup> This perhaps explains how the navigator of the *Enola Gay*, which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, could feel not the slightest ghost of a regret for his role in incinerating thousands upon thousands of innocents: he recalled that after the mission he “had a bite and a few beers, and hit the sack,” and claimed to have lost not a single night’s sleep over his actions.<sup>22</sup> J. Douglas Harvey, another World War II bomber pilot, similarly testified to a lack of guilt, since he “could not visualize the horrible deaths my bombs had caused.”<sup>23</sup>

Conversely, when people can see and hear the suffering they cause, they usually shudder and feel a sense of revulsion and the sting of shame. Studies of obedient aggression<sup>24</sup> strongly support this observation: when the victim’s pain becomes more evident and personalized, people are less willing to follow the injurious commands of the authority figure.

In addition to avoiding the harmful consequences of their actions, agents may either deny the factual existence of the harm (“this didn’t happen,” “this isn’t credible”) or, having acknowledged its existence, minimize it (“you’re exaggerating,” “it’s not as bad as you say”).

### *Dehumanizing and Blaming the Victim*

The last disengagement mechanism described by Bandura works on the *targets* of inhumane acts. If someone is perceived as less than human, the scope of what can coercively be done to them expands tremendously. Once dehumanized, a person is no longer a recognizable human agent, but an object or thing without feelings, hopes, and concerns; they are mindless “savages,” “gooks,” “satanic fiends,” “cockroaches,” “vermin.”<sup>25</sup> Thus transformed, they can be brutalized and killed without self-reproach or shame; indeed, “exterminating” them can be seen as a moral duty. By contrast, “people strongly disapprove of punitive actions and rarely excuse them when they are directed at persons depicted in humanized terms.”<sup>26</sup>

Another way in which the violent can immunize themselves against self-reproof is by reversing the roles of perpetrator and victim.<sup>27</sup> By viewing themselves as the injured party and the victim as the “true” aggressor, the perpetrator can reframe their violent actions as rightful retaliation or punishment. Violence can be reconceptualized as “justice.” Or, perpetrators can insist that they were “provoked,” and that the victim “pushed” or “drove” them to act. This last possibility is less a justification than an excuse, since the perpetrator does not claim that they were “in the right”; rather, their rhetorical efforts are directed at denying *culpability*—they “are not to blame.”<sup>28</sup>

As can be seen from the above summary, mechanisms of moral disengagement work by denying not the legitimacy of moral norms, but rather their *applicability* to particular actions or situations: “yes, I killed him, but it wasn’t *murder*”; “yes, we had sex, but

I never *raped* her”; “yes, it’s coercive, but it isn’t *torture*”;<sup>29</sup> “yes, I killed them, but it wasn’t *terrorism*.” Thus mechanisms of moral disengagement operate by rhetorically *recategorizing* agent-misbehavior, not by disputing the legitimacy of the very rules that the misbehavior transgresses. Once the moral wrongdoing in question is recategorized as something other than it is—once, say, the killing of Jews is not classified as murder<sup>30</sup> or the temporary drowning of terror suspects is not classified as torture—then these activities can be performed freely, without moral inhibition.

The aim in what now follows will be to identify a number of moral disengagement mechanisms or, to use the terminology of Sykes and Matza, “neutralizations” in the *jihadi* Salafi ideology. However, before embarking on this task it will be necessary to outline, in ideal-typical terms, the key ideas, assumptions and motifs on which the *jihadi* Salafi outlook draws. This outline, being an outline, is by no means exhaustive, and is correspondingly selective in its discussion of various views and thinkers.

### The *Jihadi* Salafi Ideology: An Overview

Of all the varieties of Islamism, Salafism is one of the most extreme, embracing a strikingly puritanical moral and political vision.<sup>31</sup> To speak very approximately, there are two factions within the Salafi community: the *non-violent Salafis*, who strongly reject the use of violence as an instrument for change, and the *jihadi Salafis*, who insist that violence is a legitimate tactic in the current social and political context in which the Muslim world finds itself. In other words, *jihadi* Salafis are part of *a faction within a faction*, which in turn is marked by deep divisions, especially over the question of violence (that is, when and against whom it can be legitimately used). Since the aim of this article is to illuminate, however partially, the enabling conditions of the current wave of *jihadist* violence against “the West,” spearheaded by Al Qaeda, the ideas and doctrines considered here are those espoused by the ultraviolent elements in the *jihadi* Salafi movement, and cannot be taken as representative of the views of *all* *jihadi* Salafis.

The term “Salafi” is used to denote those who rigorously follow the example of the companions (*salaf*) of the Prophet Mohammed. As followers of the companions, Salafis believe that they are preserving the “true” meaning of Islam against what they see as the impurities and corruptions of subsequent religious practice. From the Salafi perspective, Truth lies in the original sources of Islam (the Qur’an, the Sunna, and the hadiths), and any interpretations that deviate from the original sources are rejected as distortions that lead away from the path of God.

In outlook Salafis are *totalist*, in that they believe that Islam is a complete code of life, and envisage no sphere of human activity independent from its scope. They are also *fundamentalist*, in that they believe that Islam is the literal word of God and cannot therefore be questioned or revised in any way.

As well as being totalist and fundamentalist, Salafism is also *morally absolutist*, in that its adherents think that the Islam of the original sources embodies deep moral truths about how people ought to live their lives. Salafis believe that there is only *one* Truth, that that Truth is reflected in Islam, and that all other alternative moral approaches to life are seriously wrong or confused.

Salafism is thus fundamentally, unappeasably, and self-consciously opposed to the political ideals of Western liberalism. Not only does it reject the Millian idea of the “private sphere,” where individuals are free to think and act as they wish (so long as they inflict no direct material harm on others); it also repudiates the secular ideal of a public space free from religious dictates or influence. Moreover, Salafism directly challenges the

liberal ideal of skeptical inquiry, according to which “truth” is never final but is contested, dialectical, and constantly revisable in the light of empirical evidence and the free exchange of conflicting ideas.

Salafis are also vehemently opposed to the liberal politics of compromise and the connected idea that progressive change can be achieved through reforming existing political institutions. Indeed, they are radically and defiantly *utopian*, in that their avowed ambition is to break completely and totally with existing practices and to reestablish the order of the Prophet’s early community.

Writing of the new global *jihadi* groups, Ahmed Rashid observes that they lack a clearly defined political vision and are completely disengaged from practical politics. They show little interest in “transforming a corrupt society into a just one,” in “providing jobs, education, or social benefits to their followers,” or in “creating harmony between the various ethnic groups that inhabit many Muslim countries.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, he writes, they “have no economic manifesto, no plan for better governance and the building of political institutions, and no blueprint for creating democratic participation in the decision-making process of their future Islamic states.”<sup>33</sup> Bruce Lawrence, referring to Al Qaeda, similarly remarks that although it “denounces a host of evils” wholly absent from its vision is “any social program” or clearly specified “alternative conception of the ideal society.”<sup>34</sup> This failure to engage in practical politics and to develop viable policies reflects not an absence of imagination on the part of the *jihadis*, but rather the strength of their revolutionary utopianism.

What is distinctive about the *jihadi* wing of Salafism is its fusion of the aforementioned elements with an ethos of murderous violence—an ethos, to repeat, vehemently rejected by the Salafi mainstream. Although *jihadi* Salafis by definition are committed to the notion of waging a violent *jihad* in defense of Islam, there has been intense dispute among key figures within the movement over a number of crucial questions related to the nature and scope of this violent *jihad*. When is it right to fight? Are Muslim rulers a legitimate target for violent attack? Is it permissible to deliberately kill civilians? Are suicide missions—so-called ‘martyrdom operations’—a legitimate tactic in the defense of Islam? The ultraviolent *jihadi* Salafis respond to these questions broadly as follows: (1) violence is perfectly legitimate if it is in response to aggression;<sup>35</sup> (2) Muslim rulers are a legitimate target for attack if it can be shown that they are responsible for implementing non-Islamic laws or have lent their support to the crusader enemies of Islam; (3) the deliberate killing of “infidel” civilians is legitimate if it is undertaken for the purposes of revenge and is justly proportionate or if it can be shown that the infidels in question support (either explicitly or tacitly) those who wage war on Muslims; (4) the “martyrdom operation” is a legitimate weapon of self-defense against infidel aggressors. Quintan Wiktorowicz, in a brilliantly incisive discussion of these *jihadi* positions,<sup>36</sup> insists that they are recent ideological innovations, and says that together they represent a dramatic erosion of the traditional Islamic constraints upon warfare and violence. Indeed, so dramatic has this erosion been that Martin Amis is exaggerating only slightly when he says of the *jihadi* ideology that “no armed doctrine in history has availed itself of a vaster target—anything and anyone.”<sup>37</sup> Only non-combatant Muslims enjoy full immunity from deliberate *jihadi* violence,<sup>38</sup> although *jihadis*, as already mentioned, apply a notoriously broad definition of combat.<sup>39</sup>

There is also a strain within the *jihadi* Salafi movement that not only justifies but enthusiastically *celebrates* the use of violence against an ever-expanding category of enemies, and which takes sadistic pleasure from the act of killing itself. For these particular *jihadists*, the aim is not just to destroy the enemy, but to *torment* and *degrade* it. Walter Laqueur describes this as the “barbarization of terrorism,” and by way of illustration refers to the followers of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, some of whom would upbraid him for cutting throats



too quickly.<sup>40</sup> The *jihadi* Salafis are certainly not the only terrorists to have perpetrated acts of barbaric savagery, but, as Laqueur observes, its members seem especially prone to them.

Historically, the roots of the *jihadi* Salafi movement lie in the merger between the radical elements of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Wahhabi sect in Saudi Arabia. Intellectually, the movement's ideology is a hectic amalgam of disparate elements,<sup>41</sup> and selectively draws on the writings of, among others, Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, Mawlana Abul A'la Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, and Mohammed al-Faraj. Its outlook is also shaped by a (decidedly secular<sup>42</sup>) constellation of impulses, beliefs, and prejudices, among them: a virulent anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism; a mythic idea of the Afghan *jihad*; a narrative of Muslim victimization at the hands of the West; and the ancient doctrine of the *lex talionis* (the principle of "an eye for an eye").

The figure of Sayyid Qutb casts an especially long shadow over the *jihadi* Salafi imagination, and although Qutb is reviled among many Salafi scholars his general sociological vision, or way of understanding the world, has been broadly taken up by many of the *jihadi* groups.<sup>43</sup> Qutb's outlook is often described (and derided) as "Manichean" and "reductive." It is not difficult to see why. For Qutb, the world is divided into two houses: the House of Islam (*Dār al-Islām*), in which Muslim governments rule, and the House of War (*Dār al-Harb*), the rest of the world, inhabited and ruled by infidels. Qutb's central argument is that something has gone deeply wrong in the House of Islam: not only has it lost its global dominance; it has become enfeebled, corrupt, and permissive. Qutb's explanation for this is rooted in his analysis of the marginalization of Islam in the contemporary Muslim world. By embracing the secular creeds of socialism and nationalism, Muslim leaders had effectively renounced the supreme sovereignty of Allah, and thereby condemned their societies to failure and ruin. Or so Qutb thought.

In developing this account, Qutb invoked the deeply resonant Islamic term *jahiliyya*, which was classically applied to the period of paganism that existed in Arabia before the advent of the Prophet, and refers to ignorance, or defiance, of God's absolute sovereignty. According to Qutb, the contemporary Muslim world, like that of pre-Mohammedan Arabia, is in a state of *jahiliyya*: a state of spiritual and societal disarray. *Jahiliyya*, though, is most acute in the West, which Qutb saw as, in the words of Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, "a gigantic brothel, steeped in animal lust, greed, and selfishness,"<sup>44</sup> and where God's sovereignty had been thoroughly usurped by lowly men.

Despite his sizeable contempt for the non-Islamic world, especially America,<sup>45</sup> Qutb was most scathing about the governments of the Muslim world, which, in his view, were guilty of apostasy, of being falsely Islamic. Qutb's scorn was directed in particular at the government of the country from which he came, Egypt, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser.<sup>46</sup> Qutb was adamant: Nasser's pan-Arabist regime, despite professing Islamic credentials, was in fact an enemy of Islam and had to be overthrown and replaced by an authentically Islamic polity. Qutb was active in plotting the regime's downfall, although the revolution he envisaged never materialized.

Having identified the problem of *jahiliyya* in the contemporary Muslim world, Qutb offered a solution. "Modernizing" Muslims, he said, are categorically wrong. The troubles of the Muslim world, he explained, are the result not of insufficient modernization but, on the contrary, of a modernization process gone too far and divorced from Islamic laws and customs. In their efforts to adapt to modernity, Muslim governments had adopted foreign laws and customs, and thereby chose to jettison core Islamic principles. For Qutb, it was that disregard for, or casual indifference toward, God's law that had consigned Muslims to failure. The only solution was to wholeheartedly return to the authentic Muslim way of life.

Only by restoring Islam to the center of their lives could Muslims hope to recapture their rightful place as the dominant culture in the world.<sup>47</sup> But, Qutb warned, the path to Allah is by no means straightforward, and is imperiled by both external and internal threats. On one side are the “infidels,” who seek to exploit and seduce<sup>48</sup> the believers for their own ends. And on the other are the false, “apostate” Muslims, who, by embracing Western ideas and philosophies, seek to corrupt the Islamic world from the inside. For Qutb, peaceful coexistence or compromise with these enemies is impossible, since their ambition, which Qutb believed they were close to achieving, is the destruction of Islam. “Those who have usurped the power of God on earth,” Qutb wrote, “will not be dispossessed by dint of word alone.”<sup>49</sup> There was no alternative: the “usurpers” had to be fought, and it was obligatory for all Muslims, who were able, to fight them. At the forefront of that fight would be an elite group of Holy warriors—a Muslim vanguard: an armed resistance movement whose purpose is to defeat the enemies of Islam and restore the Muslim world to its rightful place as a dominant imperial power.

These themes and ideas are defining and emblematic of the *jihadi* Salafi worldview, in which one can easily intuit Qutb’s Manichaean division between the righteous Muslims on the one side and the world of unbelief and impurity on the other, as well as his view that the ‘unbelievers’, led by the Americans and the Jews (the ‘Crusader-Zionist alliance’), are the source of all evil, and are deliberately plotting to corrupt and conquer the world of Islam. Qutb’s insistence that armed force is the only means by which the Muslim world can hope to save itself from ruin is also deeply embedded in the *jihadi* Salafi worldview.

Another major source of influence on the *jihadi* Salafi outlook is Mohammed al-Faraj. Following Qutb, Faraj sought to argue that it is entirely legitimate to overthrow Muslim rulers who do not properly apply the *Sharia*. In *The Neglected Duty*, published and first circulated in Cairo in the early 1980s,<sup>50</sup> Faraj trenchantly rejected the idea that *jihad* should be understood primarily as a nonviolent spiritual struggle for Islamic purity, and instead emphasized its meaning as armed warfare. He also argued, no less trenchantly, that violent *jihad* in defense of Islam is an obligatory duty for all Muslims, and that this *jihad* should be initially waged against the false “apostate” Muslim rulers who deviate from, or fail to fully implement, Islamic law:

The basis of the existence of imperialism in the lands of Islam is these self-same rulers. To begin with the struggle against imperialism is a work which is neither glorious nor useful, and it is only a waste of time. It is our duty to concentrate on our Islamic cause, and that is the establishment first of all of God’s law in our own country and causing the word of God to prevail. There is no doubt that the first battlefield of the jihad is the extirpation of these infidel leaderships and their replacement by a perfect Islamic order. . .<sup>51</sup>

Faraj’s prioritizing of the internal *jihad* was informed by his view that without apostates, external enemies are essentially powerless and can be repelled with ease.<sup>52</sup> Faraj also believed that the internal *jihad* was a necessary precondition for a wider offensive *jihad* against unbelief everywhere.

Although the *jihadi* Salafi movement was incubated in the concentration camps of Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>53</sup> it was not until after the Afghan *jihad* against the Soviet Union that it emerged as a serious global political force.<sup>54</sup> What the *jihad* against the Soviets did was to bring together, from all over the globe, a group of *jihadis* and give them not only invaluable expertise in guerilla warfare but also a powerful sense, emotional and ideological, of the absolute primacy of *jihad* as an idea and way of life.<sup>55</sup> More importantly, it instilled

in the *jihadis* a profound sense of invincibility: shortly after its defeat in Afghanistan the Soviet Union collapsed. This tremendously emboldened the *jihadis*, who believed, erroneously, that they, with God's blessing, had single-handedly brought down the godless Soviet empire. This belief in turn engendered and fortified the notion that if the Soviets could be destroyed, then so too could the other remaining godless superpower, America.<sup>56</sup>

Of those who fought the Soviets, a small group remained in Afghanistan and was co-opted by bin Laden into what was to become Al Qaeda.<sup>57</sup> Already battled-hardened and accomplished ideological killers, bin Laden's role was to mobilize and lead them for the coming *jihad*, of which they would be the leading vanguard, against America.

Bin Laden's decision to launch the *jihad* against America, first announced in 1996, reflected a major shift in tactical thinking, in that the direct target for military attack had switched from the "near enemy"—the incumbent Muslim regimes against whom Qutb and Faraj had sought to incite violence—to the "far enemy"—the United States and its allies.<sup>58</sup> Although controversial among his fellow *jihadis*, some of whom doubted not only its moral legitimacy but also its tactical wisdom, the rationale behind the new strategy was clear, as Stephen Holmes explains: "By attacking US interests, [Al Qaeda] hoped to force the United States to withdraw its troops from the Gulf and its support for Mubarak, just as attacks in Lebanon in 1983 and Somalia in 1993 had driven the Americans to pull out their troops. To overthrow both Mubarak and the House of Saud, the Americans must be induced to abandon their clients. The most effective way to undermine the near enemy was to attack the distant enemy."<sup>59</sup>

In discussing the contemporary *jihadist* ideology, many commentators and pundits are liable to impose upon it the weight of an entrenched monolith, proclaiming that its "tentacles" are spread "far and wide". Or else they compare it to an infectious disease, identifying where in the social body outbreaks are likely to occur and how best to immunize against them. Neither of these metaphors is especially helpful, since, as suggested earlier, not only does the *jihadi* Salafi ideology remain a marginal strand within the broad spectrum of Islamism; it is also often *actively* sought out and taken up by those who come to embrace it. However, it is by no means overstating matters to say that its reach is now properly global, and that, though not infectious, it clearly strikes a resonant chord among a large and increasing number of Muslims from a diversity of backgrounds. Having outlined the animating ideas and concerns of this ideology, the article will now focus on how it serves to neutralize moral controls, thus clearing the path for inhumanities.

## The Neutralizations of the Jihadi Salafi Ideology

### *Moral Justification: Self-Defense and Retaliation*

The *jihadi* Salafi outlook, as shown thus far, actively embraces, and in some cases glorifies, the use of lethal violence against non-Muslim ("infidel") civilians. Behind this embrace are two distinct justifications, each with a different philosophical grounding.

The first holds that the Muslim world is under grave assault from both foreign invaders—"crusaders"<sup>60</sup>—and corrupt Muslim leaders—"apostates," "unbelievers," or "false Muslims." This is from bin Laden's 1998 public statement:

Never since God made it, created its desert, and encircled it with seas has the Arabian Peninsula been invaded by such forces as the crusader armies that have swarmed across it like locusts, devouring its plantations and growing fat off its

riches. All this is happening at a time when nations are attacking Muslims like leeches.<sup>61</sup>

Bin Laden identifies the following as instances of clear, outright aggression on the part of the crusaders against the *Ummah*: (1) the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, “the most sacred of the Islamic lands”; (2) the visiting of terrible, indeed genocidal, devastation on the Iraqi people, by means of the American-sponsored and enforced United Nations sanctions-regime; and (3) opulent U.S. patronage of the state of Israel, and hence direct collusion with the infidel occupation of Jerusalem and the oppression and murder of Palestinians.<sup>62</sup>

So grave is the assault on Islam—bin Laden, following Qutb, believes that Islam “as a creed” is on the brink of “extermination”<sup>63</sup>—that the use of violence to repel the combined infidel and apostate aggressors is an urgent necessity. The time for dialogue has long passed, although dialogue is in any case pointless, since the aggressors are inherently untrustworthy and violence is the only language they are capable of understanding.<sup>64</sup> The use of violence, then, is a *practical imperative*: the only means by which the very survival of Islam as a religion, way of life, and identity can be assured; and the deliberate use of violence against infidel *civilians* in particular can be justified, since it is the only effective weapon available to the defenders of Islam.<sup>65</sup> As Ayman al-Zawahiri says of the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, they did it “because they were forced to defend their community and their sacred religion from centuries of aggression” and “had no means other than suicide attacks to defend themselves.”<sup>66</sup> This justification is utilitarian in character, as it proclaims that the end (the survival of Islam and the Islamic world) justifies the means (the suicidal mass murder of civilians). In postulating that a sufficiently worthy goal can justify the use of utterly reprehensible tactics, it is salutary to note that *jihadi* Salafis are using the self-same argumentative logic as that of the secular terrorists with whom they are often contrasted.<sup>67</sup>

The second justification differs markedly from the first, in that it scorns any reference to means–ends calculations, and justifies the deliberate killing of “infidel,” especially American, civilians as a good in itself. Killing and terrorizing them, the argument goes, is a form of *reciprocal* or *retributive justice*, and ought to be used for that purpose, and not just as a means to achieve strategic military victories over the crusader–apostate enemy. In the *jihadi* Salafi worldview, the case runs as follows: since “America” has murdered thousands upon thousands of innocent Muslims, it is only right that a similar number of innocent Americans should suffer the same fate. “We have the right to do to the infidels what they have done to us,” says al-Zawahiri.<sup>68</sup> Whether or not Americans are themselves innocent of any actual aggression toward Muslims is beside the point, since justice demands that a certain number of them be killed in order to achieve parity with the number of innocent Muslims indiscriminately killed by Americans.<sup>69</sup> This is Al Qaeda’s chief spokesman Suleiman Abu Gheith:

The Americans have still not tasted from our hands what we have tasted from theirs. The number of killed in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were no more than fair exchange for the ones killed in the Al-’Amiriya shelter in Iraq, and are but a tiny part of the exchange for those killed in Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, the Philippines, Bosnia, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Afghanistan. We have not reached parity with them. We have the right to kill 4 million Americans—2 million of them children—and to exile twice as many and wound and cripple hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, it is our right to fight them with chemical and biological weapons, so as to afflict them with the fatal maladies that

have afflicted the Muslims because of the Americans' chemical and biological weapons.<sup>70</sup>

In his "Message to the American People," broadcast on 28 October 2004, bin Laden is similarly brazen in his use of the language of retribution and desert. Referring to the 9/11 attacks, he praises God, who "allowed the oppressed to *take revenge* on the oppressor."<sup>71</sup> Speaking of "the events that affected me personally," he highlights Israel's U.S.-assisted invasion of Lebanon in 1982: this, he says, enraged him, and furnished him with "a strong resolve to *punish the oppressors*."<sup>72</sup> Watching as the devastation in Lebanon unfolded—"I cannot forget those unbearable scenes of blood and severed limbs, the corpses of women and children strewn everywhere, houses destroyed along with their occupants and high-rise buildings burying their residents"—it occurred to bin Laden that "we should *punish the oppressor in kind* and destroy the towers of America, *so that they could experience some of what we had experienced*."<sup>73</sup> The principle that informs bin Laden's discourse here is the ancient *lex talionis*: an eye for an eye.<sup>74</sup>

Terrorism, within this particular legitimacy framework, thus performs an *expressive*, and not an instrumental, purpose: specifically, the expressive purpose of *punishing* aggressors for past sins. Philosophically, this is what may be called an "intrinsicist" position,<sup>75</sup> since it constructs the killing of "infidels" as intrinsically or inherently valuable, as something worthy *in itself* or to be achieved *for its own sake*, regardless of consequences.

By learning and internalizing these two justifications, *jihadis* are able to overcome their moral revulsion against killing the innocent, and thus clear the path for inhumanity. They can murder and maim civilians and yet come to believe that they are acting perfectly justly, in defense of something wonderful and glorious—the creed of Islam or the honor of murdered Muslims.

### ***Victim-Blaming and Dehumanization***

*Jihadi* Salafis, as just noted, are able to neutralize the moral prohibition against the deliberate killing of civilians by drawing on two distinct lines of argument: the first, grounded in a utilitarian ethics, states that the killing in question is a practical necessity, while the second, grounded in an absolutist ethics, states that it is righteous retribution for past crimes, regardless of the moral guilt of the actual victims themselves. A third line of argument, firmly anchored in the *jihadi* Salafi worldview, states that although the intentional killing of innocent civilians *cannot* be justified,<sup>76</sup> the civilian members of Western infidel regimes, especially the United States, are *not* actually innocent, and hence can be killed at will.<sup>77</sup> Although not themselves directly or materially responsible for the "crusader-Zionist" aggression against Muslims, they are nonetheless active in supporting those who are, and so are legitimate targets for attack.<sup>78</sup> Here is how bin Laden frames the argument: by choosing tyrannical leaders, American civilians "have given their consent to the incarceration of the Palestinian people, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the slaughter of the children of Iraq. This is why the American people are not innocent. The American people are active members in all these crimes."<sup>79</sup> Hence: "We do not differentiate between military or civilian . . . they are all targets."<sup>80</sup> In other words, by dint of their voting behavior, Americans are indirectly blameworthy for the aggression of their elected masters, and cannot therefore claim non-combatant immunity from defensive or retaliatory violence.

As can be seen, the rhetorical strategy at work in this particular argument is very different from that which underpins the two modes of argument discussed in the previous subsection, since its purpose is to *recategorize* terrorism as *legitimate warfare* against

aggressors, and not to unapologetically and self-righteously justify it, either as a means of self-defense or as a mode of retributive punishment. Bin Laden, confusingly, routinely adopts all three lines of argument, and hence simultaneously claims that terrorism is warranted (as a tool for both self-defense and punishing transgressors), and that terrorism is *not* warranted (since it menaces the innocent).

As already observed in the discussion of Bandura's work, a particularly effective weapon for neutralizing the resistance to killing civilians is to dehumanize them. Within the *jihadi* Salafi worldview, the various enemies of Islam are defined not merely as "aggressors" or "belligerents," but as objects of utter revulsion—to the point whereby their humanoid features are eclipsed almost entirely. They are defined not as individuals, but solely in terms of a derogatory collective master status: they are, variously, "infidels," "unbelievers," "kufir," "apostates," "pagans," "Satan-worshippers," "godless," and "slags."<sup>81</sup> These identities serve to denigrate their bearers and transform them into "a lower species";<sup>82</sup> they also serve to "ritually separate" them from "the legitimate order,"<sup>83</sup> and to symbolically distinguish them from the righteous Muslims, to whom they are seen as woefully inferior. And, as inferiors—recall Qutb's view that American's are animal-like in their appetites and sensibilities, and recall also bin Laden's claim that brute violence is the only language that "the infidels" can comprehend—they must be treated as such, without the dignity and humanity naturally accorded to Muslims. As Herbert Kelman classically observed, once dehumanized people are acutely vulnerable to the inhuman depredations of others.<sup>84</sup>

### *Denial of Personal Agency*

Of the various neutralizations at work in the *jihadi* Salafi ideology, the denial of agency is perhaps the most prominent. Virtually every aspect of the *jihadi* idiom is informed by the idea that the *jihad* is not a choice, but a defining, unshakeable moral obligation, and that, more importantly, it is directed by God. *Jihadis* do not, then, see themselves as voluntary actors, but, on the contrary, as *instruments* of God's will. For example, in bin Laden's 1998 manifesto the following pronouncement occurs: "We—with God's help— call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded *to comply with God's order* to kill the Americans and plunder them of their possessions wherever and whenever they find them."<sup>85</sup> By viewing their actions as divinely mandated, *jihadis* can carry out inhumanities on a massive scale, secure in the belief that they are not personally culpable for them.<sup>86</sup> They can kill, or contemplate killing, without a sense of guilt or moral doubt. As the main character in John Updike's novel *Terrorist* puts it, referring to his planned suicide mission, "I have placed myself in God's hand, and feel very serene. My own will, my own cravings, are at rest."<sup>87</sup>

### *Disregard of Consequences*

One of the most striking aspects of the *jihadi* Salafi ideology is its blatant, almost casually nihilistic, disregard for the value of human life: there are indeed few people whom *jihadis* would *not* be able to justify or excuse killing. But there is another sense in which it scorns the value of human life, and that is in respect to its radical elevation of the afterlife, in comparison with which material human life seems trivial and insignificant.

*Jihadis* publicly claim to embrace and even *desire* death, unlike the infidels, whom they stigmatize as pathetic and craven in their love for life. This is no mere boast on the part of the *jihadis*, but is perfectly consistent with their view that human life is but a short preface to the afterlife, and that the latter monumentally dwarfs the former in cosmic significance

and meaning. To view the world of human affairs in this way is to inure oneself not only against a fear of death, but also the revulsion to killing, since if human life is seen as trifling, so too is the act of extinguishing it. *Jihadis*, evidently, do not even feel guilty about inadvertently killing innocent Muslims, as the properly righteous and God-fearing among them will be destined for paradise in any case.<sup>88</sup> Once the injurious consequences attached to killing are trivialized, as they are here, killing can be carried out with relative ease.

### The Neutralizations of Mohammed Bouyeri

Still calm, he made no serious attempt to escape. While he reloaded his gun, a woman who happened by screamed: “You can’t do that!” “Yes, I can”, Bouyeri replied, before strolling into a nearby park with several patrol cars rushing to the scene.<sup>89</sup>

Although it would be an impossibly large task to empirically trace the presence of the aforementioned neutralizations in the thinking of the murderers and martyrs of the global Salafi *jihad* (i.e., those members of the movement who *overcame* the moral constraints against killing), there is good reason to believe, on the basis of a number of well-documented statements made by a not insignificant number of them, that at the time of their murderous actions they had fully assimilated them. The case of Mohammed Bouyeri—the Moroccan-Dutch *jihadist* who murdered Theo van Gogh—is an instructive one, not only because Bouyeri fully internalized and espoused the neutralizations of the *jihadi* Salafi worldview, but also because he self-consciously and brazenly *acted upon them* and murdered in the name of Islam. The case also illuminates just how rapidly the *jihadi* Salafi worldview has transcended its historical and geographical specificities and evolved into a global free-floating conceptual resource, readily accessible from any Internet server, and how its adoption among displaced and second-generation Muslims living in Western societies, far from being a passive process, is *effortful* activity, indeed the product of a sustained and active engagement.

First, let us consider Bouyeri’s actions. This is how Ian Buruma renders them in his lucid and insightful book-length examination of Van Gogh’s murder and its fall-out:

It was the coolness of his manner, the composure of a person who knew precisely what he was doing, that struck those who saw Mohammed Bouyeri, a twenty-six-year-old Moroccan-Dutchman in a gray raincoat and prayer hat, blast the filmmaker Theo van Gogh off his bicycle on a dreary morning in Amsterdam. He shot him calmly in the stomach, and after the victim had staggered to the other side of the street, shot him several more times, pulled out a curved machete, and cut his throat—“as though slashing a tire”, according to one witness.

Leaving the machete planted firmly in Van Gogh’s chest, he then pulled a smaller knife from a bag, scribbled something on a piece of paper, folded the letter neatly, and pinned it to the body with this second knife . . .

Bouyeri gave the corpse a few hard kicks and walked away, without hurry, easy as could be, as though he had done nothing more dramatic than fillet a fish.<sup>90</sup>

Bouyeri’s actions, because of their elaborate cruelty and potent symbolism, cry out for explanation. This is what the murder was not: it was *not* an “instrumental” act. According

to the rational choice theory of criminal behavior,<sup>91</sup> offenders are fundamentally rational decision-makers, and their offending can be explained in terms of the material benefits it brings them. Criminal activity is thus the outcome of a process of reasoning, whereby the offender calculates the prospective costs and benefits of committing a crime. From this perspective, the offender, far from being “sick” or psychologically deficient, is simply an *ordinary person*, and “employs the same sorts of cognitive strategies when contemplating offending as the rest of us use when making other decisions.”<sup>92</sup> Bouyeri, as Buruma makes clear in his book, was indeed the apotheosis of ordinary, a person unremarkable in every conceivable way. But his actions can scarcely be described as rational or instrumental, since they were not designed to further Bouyeri’s material interests, nor were they intended to strategically further a wider cause. Bouyeri’s chief intention was not to inspire fear or to coerce anyone into doing anything; his intention, rather, was to *punish* Van Gogh—for gratuitously insulting and dishonoring Islam and its Prophet. His actions, then, were not instrumental, but *expressive*, and were carried out *for their own sake*. As Buruma puts it, the slaughter of Van Gogh was a “principled murder”;<sup>93</sup> and this is exactly how Bouyeri himself characterized his actions: at his trial, he flatly said that he was divinely obligated to “cut off the heads of all those who insult Allah and his prophet.”<sup>94</sup>

The question of *why* Bouyeri chose, or felt compelled, to murder Van Gogh is an essential one, although it shall not be considered here. But whatever it was that caused him to violently murder Van Gogh, Bouyeri’s actions were strongly premised on, and *facilitated* by, a set of deep moral convictions and cognitive beliefs. What were they, or in what did they consist?

Bouyeri’s radicalization into the cult of revolutionary jihadism was astonishingly rapid, and took place over little more than one year. The path he followed is a familiar one: his old habits—the beer drinking, the dope smoking, the chasing after girls—were discarded, and gave way to “an increasingly moralistic outlook.”<sup>95</sup> He refused to shake hands with women, dropped old friends, and changed his appearance: “Not only had he grown a beard, but a Moroccan djellaba and prayer hat were now part of his usual dress, instead of jeans.”<sup>96</sup> By the middle of 2003, he had retreated into the narrow world of a few like-minded friends—the Hofstad Group, as Dutch intelligence would brand them. More crucially, for the purposes of this article, he had also embraced the revolutionary doctrine of *takfir*, according to which Muslims who depart from the true faith and fail to live by divine laws must be declared apostates and subject to punishment by death.

In the report he wrote in his capacity as an expert witness in Bouyeri’s trial, Rudolph Peters provides a fascinating insight into Bouyeri’s beliefs, and how they evolved into an ideology that primed him for murderous violence. Bouyeri, Peters says, was convinced that the world order was dominated by the forces of evil, personified by the West and especially America, and that Islam was under threat of extinction at the hands of these forces. He also believed that these forces could only be fought and defeated by means of violent struggle, and that that struggle would precipitate the arrival of a worldwide Islamic order.<sup>97</sup>

Peters records that although Bouyeri and his circle did not have any direct organizational links with international *jihadist* groups, they were initially mentored by Abu Khaled Redouan el-Issa, a former Syrian army officer who had applied for political asylum in Germany. El-Issa, Peters notes, introduced them to the ideas of radical Islamism.<sup>98</sup> Peters specifically mentions that a rigorous examination of the seized documents stored on Bouyeri’s computer revealed that Bouyeri and the group “were ideologically heavily indebted to the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb and the Indian/Pakistani Mawlana Abul A’la Mawdudi.”<sup>99</sup> “Moreover,” he says, “large amounts of more recent Salafi material, especially from radical Saudi religious scholars and from authors who had fought in Afghanistan were found.”<sup>100</sup>



Peters quotes extensively from Bouyeri's own writings, some of which had been posted on the Internet. Of the various quotations cited by Peters, the following are especially pertinent:

There are *dark satanic forces* that have sown their *seed of evil* everywhere in the world. This seed has been sown in the Islamic world in the times of colonialism and has since then taken root. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic caliphate the enemies of Islam have been active in gradually carrying out their plans aiming at the *total destruction of Islam* . . .<sup>101</sup>

The Islamic Ummah seems to be visited by a *cancerous growth* that has disseminated all over the body. We are on the *edge of an abyss* and it seems that it is only a matter of time before we smash ourselves up. We are a frustrated nation betrayed by the so-called leaders of this Ummah, leaders who have sold themselves as *cheap whores* to the West and allow the spirits and souls of Muslim youth to be poisoned by the poison of unbelief.<sup>102</sup>

The death and torture of our brothers and sisters must be redeemed with your own blood. You have become targets everywhere. . . . Life will become Hell for you and you will not find rest until our brothers and sisters have it.<sup>103</sup>

In these quotes, one can easily discern the central themes of the *jihadi* Salafi worldview: the theme of Islam under grave assault from evil forces both outside and *within* the Muslim world; the theme of lost Islamic preeminence; and the theme of just retribution against civilian unbelievers. Also discernable are two particularly potent neutralization tropes: the idea of righteous violence and the idea of a dehumanized (“satanic”) enemy.

Whatever Bouyeri's underlying motivations for wanting to kill Theo van Gogh, it is clear that he would not have been able to go through with the act of killing him had he not been able to justify or rationalize it in his own mind; and, as Peters's analysis shows, it was the *jihadi* Salafi ideology that provided him with the tools for accomplishing the morally disengaged mindset that the killing required. Also evident from Peters's analysis is the *willed* nature of Bouyeri's ideological conversion: the *jihadi* Salafi ideology was not imposed on him by outside nefarious forces, but was a resource that he actively sought out and selectively drew from for his own purposes.

### **Conclusion: Implications for Countering the Global Salafi *Jihad***

As this article has tried to show, the core ideas that form the *jihadi* Salafi ideology are not just abstract theoretical propositions that exist at an intellectual distance from worldly affairs but are in fact *actively present* in the world, and when put to use perform a range of social actions, such as *legitimizing*, *excusing*, *denying*, *demonizing*, and ultimately, *neutralizing*. They are not, to rephrase J. L. Austin's classic formula,<sup>104</sup> just all talk; they also *do*. Or, to steal an expression from Quentin Tarantino's fictional creation Mr. Blonde, they do not just bark; they also *bite*.

The observation that the *jihadi* ideology functions as an instrument for inhumanity—characteristically expressed in the phrase that it is an “armed doctrine”—is not in itself particularly striking or original. What this article has tried to do is to give the observation theoretical content, and conceptualize *how*, or in what ways, the ideology arms its users for violence.

By way of conclusion, a few points will be made on the practical implications of the analysis sketched out here. Broadly or crudely put, there are two master conceptual schemes

for thinking about the question of what is to be done about *jihadi* terrorism. The first, which attracts strong support from those on the right of the political spectrum but also from so-called hawkish liberals and leftists, argues that the response should focus on destroying *jihadi* terror networks by capturing or killing their members, and variously advocates the use of police work, surveillance, indefinite detention of suspects, interrogations, targeted assassinations, and even preemptive military strikes to achieve this. Hence, this particular scheme prioritizes the use of *coercion*, and even outright violence, as an instrument for preventing further *jihadi* attacks on civilians.

The second master conceptual scheme, which draws solid backing from the so-called doves on the left of the political spectrum, looks very different, and argues that the response should focus on the grievances of the *jihadists*, in an effort to de-radicalize them or deprive them of the wider support on which they depend. Tariq Ali's insistence that the 7 July 2005 attacks in London were at root caused by Britain's participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and that therefore "the real solution" for avoiding further such attacks is to end "the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine"<sup>105</sup> is emblematic of this outlook. Hence, this particular scheme advocates a nonviolent, *conciliatory* response, and prioritizes the use of progressive foreign and domestic policy—engaging the Israeli–Palestinian dispute, denying support for corrupt and oppressive regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere, aiding the progressive and democratic forces throughout the world, and providing better opportunities for alienated Muslims at home—as an instrument for removing the "root causes" of *jihadi* attacks on civilians.

Although these two particular approaches have merits, their shortcomings are obvious. To be sure, a coercive response to terrorist actions can often be highly effective. The bombing of Al Qaeda's bases in Afghanistan, for example, dealt a devastating blow to the organization, albeit a temporary one. Lawrence Wright remarks that two months after the 9/11 attacks the Taliban government in Afghanistan, which had given sanctuary to bin Laden, "was routed, and the Al Qaeda fighters in Tora Bora were pummeled."<sup>106</sup> Wright says that although bin Laden and his chief lieutenants escaped death or capture, "nearly eighty per cent of Al Qaeda's members in Afghanistan were killed," and adds that at that point "Al Qaeda was essentially dead."<sup>107</sup> However, the effectiveness of a coercive strategy is scarcely guaranteed and can indeed play directly into the hands of the terrorists. In a perceptive article, published in 1986, Conor Cruise O'Brien writes that "military action against countries harboring terrorists," whatever "short-term advantages may be derived" from it, carries a large price—"in increased international sympathy for the 'cause' of the terrorists in question, and so in enhanced glamour and elbow room for them, all tending to legitimize and so facilitate future 'counterattacks.'"<sup>108</sup> Bandura similarly questions the long-term effectiveness of military strikes against terrorists or their sponsors, and observes that the use of extreme countermeasures "often spawns new terrorists and provides new justifications for violence."<sup>109</sup> "Indeed," he writes, "some terrorist activities are designed precisely to provoke curtailment of personal liberties and other domestic repressive measures that might breed public disaffection with the system."<sup>110</sup>

The roots of terrorism are no doubt located in experiences of frustration and humiliation and rage.<sup>111</sup> These experiences can be found in every society, but they are especially prevalent in those that are in severe social, economic, and political disarray. It is by no means fanciful to think that terrorism would exert a less insistent presence in the world today if these conditions were in some way alleviated. However, it is misguided to think that all forms of terrorist activity are responses to actual injustice or societal disarray, and naive in the extreme to suppose that any single nation-state could realistically do anything

to markedly improve the situation of all the world's oppressed, desperate, resentful, and alienated populations.

An alternative or supplementary approach, and one that is strongly implicit in the argument of this article, is that terrorist activity, although it can never of course be eradicated,<sup>112</sup> can nevertheless be seriously hindered by *delegitimizing* the various legitimacy symbolic resources on which it draws. The idea behind this approach—scarcely original,<sup>113</sup> but no less persuasive for that—is that “any course of action will be inhibited to the degree that it cannot be legitimized,” and “any principle that helps to legitimize a course of action will therefore be among the enabling conditions of its occurrence.”<sup>114</sup> From this it follows that to inhibit *jihadist* activity it will be necessary to repudiate the ideology that legitimizes it. This will not stop the *jihadists*, and those who aspire to emulate them, from feeling aggrieved, humiliated, or disrespected. But it should hinder them from acting on these no doubt deeply felt emotions, and thus limit their deadly potential. Before the emotions of frustration and resentment can be outwardly expressed in acts of political violence, they need to be interpreted and framed within a narrative that explains their genesis and how they can be allayed.<sup>115</sup> Challenging and delegitimizing the ideologies that serve to mobilize toxic emotional states is thus an essential element in any practical strategy for dealing with terrorism.

As this article has shown, the *jihadi* Salafi ideology neutralizes the binding force of conventional moral constraints. An effective counter-*jihadist* policy must therefore work in the other direction, and *amplify* the importance and gravity of the prohibition against killing civilians. In other words, it must *neutralize the neutralizations* of the *jihadis*, and stress the absolute value or sanctity of human life. Specifically, it must undermine the scriptural basis of the *jihadis* legitimacy resources, and show how their radical interpretations fatally deviate from the various Qur'anic rulings against the deliberate killing of innocents.<sup>116</sup> As an approach, then, it must speak *directly* to the *jihadis* and the wider Muslim world of which they are a part, and engage them in their own terms. It must show that the actions of the *jihadis* are a profound affront to the spirit of the Qur'an and of Islam in general. Because of the nature of this task, and the general distrust in which the United States and the West is held in many parts of the Muslim world, it is Muslims themselves who must lead the challenge against the thinking of the *jihadis*.<sup>117</sup> Western governments must give them all the assistance that they can muster, but the challenge is only likely to succeed if it is led by a credible force, with a deep understanding of Islam and the Islamic world.

Equally important, an effective counter-*jihadist* policy must expose and repudiate the misperceptions, prejudices, and delusional aspects of the *jihadi* Salafi ideology, so as to weaken its appeal for potential recruits.<sup>118</sup> It must also highlight the terrible human costs, borne largely by Muslims themselves, of jihadism, so as to *de-glamorize* its membership. I do not for one moment believe that exposing the epistemic fallacies of the *jihadi* ideology, or exposing the terrible suffering that the *jihadis* themselves have inflicted on other Muslims, will necessarily dissuade people from joining the global Salafi *jihad*, still less encourage existing members to leave it, since its appeal is to a large extent *emotional*, and not intellectual. However misconceived, the *jihadi* Salafi ideology is deeply empowering for those who come to believe in it. Not only does it furnish the believer with a strong sense of identity and existential certainty; it also, more importantly, enables them to rationalize personal failings and to justify violent retaliation against those who are perceived as responsible for them. However, it is just obviously false, racist even, to assume that existing or potential *jihadis* are immune from appeals to reason or empirical evidence. When bin Laden contemptuously says of the West that “violence is the only language it understands” it is important to refute him. But it is equally important to refute those who ascribe the same

dehumanizing characteristic to Muslims, and to assume that *jihadis* and potential *jihadi* recruits are utterly beyond rational persuasion or second thinking. This point is strongly supported by the existence of *jihadi* defectors<sup>119</sup> and a large and expanding literature of ex-*jihadist* personal testimony.<sup>120</sup>

Ultimately, the appeal of jihadism will fade only when the sources of frustration, humiliation, and resentment in the Muslim world, and now increasingly in the West, begin to dry up. I do not have the faintest idea how, causally, that can be made to happen, still less whether in practice it *could* happen. In the meantime, the menace of jihadism is still here in earnest, and is unlikely to go away any time soon. *Jihadi* terrorists must be tracked down and brought to justice or killed. But, as I have suggested here on the basis of the argument set out in this article, their ideology must also be countered, in order to hinder current *jihadis* and disenchant potential ones.

## Notes

1. Stanley Cohen writes that they are “learnt by ordinary cultural transmission, and are drawn from a well-established, collectively available pool” (Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 59).

2. On the fruitfulness of the “sociology of accounts,” see Marvin B. Scott and Stanford M. Lyman, “Accounts,” *American Sociological Review* 33(1) (1968), pp. 46–62; and Terri L. Orbuch, “People’s Accounts Count: The Sociology of Accounts,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997), pp. 455–478.

3. Conor Cruise O’Brien (“Thinking about Terrorism,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, June (1986). Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/86jun/obrien.htm> (accessed 21 March 2009)), rightly identifies this as one of the most prevalent public stereotypes about terrorism.

4. By “terrorist actors,” the author means people—that is, ordinary human agents, not “monsters” or “crazies”—who organize and/or carry out acts of violence against civilians or non-combatants for political purposes (see C. A. J. Coady, “Defining Terrorism,” in Igor Primoratz, ed., *Terrorism: The Philosophical Issues* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 5).

5. David Finkelhor makes a similar point in relation to sexual violence against children. Four preconditions, he theorizes, must be met before a man sexually abuses a child. First, the potential offender must be *motivated* to sexually abuse a child—that is, he must *desire* sexual contact with children and feel aroused by them. Second, he must unleash his motivation to offend by overcoming the internal moral restraints blocking his offending—a process that is enabled through the use of neutralizations or “cognitive distortions.” Third, he must overcome any external restraints (i.e., guardians of the child) blocking his offending. Finally, he must overcome the child’s own resistance to the sexual abuse. Finkelhor posits that sexual abuse of a child will only occur when all of these steps have been followed in a logical sequence (Finkelhor, *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1984)).

6. In particular, Bandura owes a large debt to the work of Gresham Sykes and David Matza on “techniques of neutralization”—the rhetorical accounts used by delinquents to nullify or “render inoperative” internalized norms, thereby facilitating delinquency (see Gresham Sykes and David Matza, “Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency,” *American Sociological Review* 22 (1957), pp. 664–670).

7. See especially Albert Bandura, “Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement,” in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, (Washington: The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 1990), pp. 161–191.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

11. Quoted in Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 215.

12. Martin Amis, "An Interview with Bill Moyers," 28 July (2006). Available at [http://www.martinamisweb.com/documents/moyers\\_faith\\_reason.pdf](http://www.martinamisweb.com/documents/moyers_faith_reason.pdf) (accessed 27 December 2008).

13. Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement," p. 173; see also Herbert C. Kelman, "Violence without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of Victims and Victimizers," *Journal of Social Issues* 29(4) (1973), pp. 38–46. The famous studies of Stanley Milgram vividly demonstrate the readiness of people to inflict cruelty on others while acting under the orders of legitimate authority.

14. See Burton C. Andrus, *The Infamous of Nuremberg* (London: Fravin, 1969).

15. See Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 159–163.

16. William Calley, *Body Count: Lieutenant Calley's Story, as told to John Sack* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1971), p. 106.

17. Quoted in Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 213–214.

18. See Kelman, "Violence without Moral Restraint," pp. 46–48.

19. David Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1995), p. 122.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

21. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 209.

22. Quoted in Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 209.

23. Quoted in Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 104.

24. See especially Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

25. See Kelman, "Violence without Moral Restraint," pp. 48–52; and Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 219–220.

26. Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement," p. 181.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

28. Evidently, certain mechanisms of disengagement bleed into one another and cannot be entirely separated, as in this instance, where blaming the victim can serve to displace agent-responsibility. Moral justification narratives can also adopt "denial of personal agency" tropes, in that they often describe courses of action as *imperative* or *dictated* by principle.

29. This is a reference to George W. Bush's claim that the United States does not—did not—torture suspected terrorists. According to Bush, torture necessarily connotes "organ failure" or "permanent damage resulting in a loss of significant body function or death." Practices such as "water-boarding" and sleep deprivation cannot therefore be described (and condemned) as torture. Incidentally, Bush's denial follows the same semantic path as that of his predecessor's denial of sexual infidelity, which hinged on the rhetorical manipulation of the term "sex," redefined as exclusively vaginal penetration (thus excluding fellatio and much else).

30. A view held by various imams and jihadists: see Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005), pp. 93–94.

31. See Michael Burleigh, *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (London: Harper-Collins, 2008), p. 353.

32. Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 3.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Bruce Lawrence (ed.), *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), p. xxii.

35. The idea that force is permissible in self-defense is not of course controversial, and enjoys strong backing from mainstream Islamic scholars. Far more controversial, however, is the *jihadi* concept of aggression, which is so wide as to include inflammatory words and thoughts (see Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," pp. 90–92).

36. See Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," pp. 75–97; see also Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11," *Middle East Policy* 10(2) (2003), pp. 86–90.

37. Martin Amis, "The Real Conspiracy Behind 9/11," *The Times*, 2 September (2006); see also Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, "Killing in the Name of Islam," p. 90: Salafi jihadism justifies the killing of civilians "in almost any imaginable situation."

38. See Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," p. 89.

39. From the *jihadi* Salafi perspective, mere words or utterances supportive of the enemy are legitimate grounds for denying a person the right of immunity from violent attack in a war to defend Islam (see *ibid.*, p. 91).

40. Walter Laqueur, "Anarchism and Al Qaeda," *Middle East Strategy at Harvard*, 23 December (2007). Available at [http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/anarchism\\_and\\_qaeda/](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2007/12/anarchism_and_qaeda/) (accessed 23 June 2009).

41. Giles Kepel describes it as a "hybrid ideology": Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. A. F. Roberts (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. 219.

42. See the excellent analysis in Stephen Holmes, "Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001," in Diego Gambetta, ed., *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 131–172.

43. See especially John C. Zimmerman, "Sayyid Qutb's Influence on the 11 September Attacks," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16(2) (2004), pp. 222–224.

44. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), p. 117.

45. See especially John Calvert, "The World is an Undutiful Boy! Sayyid Qutb's American Experience," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 11(1) (2000), pp. 87–103; and Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda's Road to 9/11* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), pp. 7–31.

46. See Giles Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, trans. J. Rothschild (London: Saqi, 2005), pp. 51–52.

47. See Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 24.

48. Qutb thought that the real threat from the West came not from its military might, but from its formidable cultural allure.

49. Quoted in Buruma and Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 126.

50. For a useful summary of the text, see David C. Rapoport, "Sacred Terror: A Contemporary Example from Islam," in *Origins of Terrorism Origins of Terrorism*, pp. 103–130.

51. Quoted in Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), p. 135.

52. See Rapoport, "Sacred Terror," p. 111.

53. See especially Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam*, pp. 23–33; and Mark Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 55.

54. Fred Halliday bluntly points out that had there *not* been the Cold War, and had the United States and Saudi Arabia withheld their lavish support for the opposition guerrillas in Afghanistan, "neither Al-Qaeda nor the whole transnational world of Islamic fighters would have come into existence" (Fred Halliday, "Terrorism in Historical Perspective," *Open Democracy*, 21 April (2004). Available at [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-madridprevention/article\\_1865.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-madridprevention/article_1865.jsp) (accessed 30 December 2008)). For a similar but more qualified view, see Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, pp. 56–59.

55. See Kepel, *Jihad*, pp. 8, 18, 299–322; and Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Books, 2001), pp. 128–140.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.

57. See *ibid.*, pp. 132–134; and Michael Burleigh, *Blood and Rage*, pp. 368–380.

58. See Assaf Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks," *International Security* 33(3) (2009), pp. 58–59; and Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, pp. 18–19.

59. Stephen Holmes, "Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001," p. 168.

60. Omar Saghi explains that this derogatory term is used by *jihadists* to designate Western states, and to draw an invidious comparison between the expansionist and bloody "medieval Crusades and the current political and military intervention of some western countries in the Middle East"

(Saghi, Annotation, in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, Giles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, eds., P. Ghazaleh, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 280). From the perspective of the *jihadis*, America is the *locus classicus* of the crusader state.

61. See Kepel and Milelli (eds.), *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, p. 53.

62. See *ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

63. See Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 92.

64. In the 1997 CNN interview, bin Laden says that “Our people in the Arabian Peninsula,” whose hearts “are filled with hatred towards the American president” (then Clinton), will “send him messages with no words because he does not understand them” (see Kepel and Milelli (eds.), *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, p. 52; see also Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, “Killing in the Name of Islam,” p. 85). Saghi writes that the West’s congenital deafness to linguistic persuasion is “a leitmotif in bin Laden’s discourse” (Saghi, Annotation, in Kepel and Milelli (eds.), *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, p. 279).

65. In an interview with a Web-journal in 2006, Michael Walzer discusses, and vigorously refutes, the suggestion that this particular line of argument closely resembles his own about the necessity of terrorism in circumstances of “supreme emergency,” when a political community’s deepest values and very existence are in imminent danger of extinction from external aggressors (see especially pp. 1–2). Available at [http://www.terrorisme.net/pdf/2006\\_Walzer.pdf](http://www.terrorisme.net/pdf/2006_Walzer.pdf) (accessed 28 December 2008).

66. Quoted in Lawrence Wright, “The Rebellion Within,” *The New Yorker*, 2 June (2008). Available at [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/06/02/080602fa\\_fact\\_wright](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/06/02/080602fa_fact_wright) (accessed 28 December 2008).

67. Leon Trotsky, for example, passionately argued that the end of a “truly human” socialist society could justify the use of terrorism. “To make the individual sacred,” he said, “we must destroy the social order which crucifies him. And this problem can only be solved by blood and iron” (Leon Trotsky, “A Defense of the ‘Red Terror,’” in *Terrorism: The Philosophical Issues*, p. 41).

68. Quoted in Wright, “The Rebellion Within.”

69. See Wiktorowicz, “A Genealogy of Radical Islam,” pp. 89–90; and Aleksandar Pavković, “Towards Liberation: Terrorism from a Liberation Ideology Perspective,” in C. A. J. Coady and M. P. O’Keefe, eds., *Terrorism and Justice: Moral Argument in a Threatened World* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), pp. 63–64.

70. Suleiman Abu Gheith, “Why We Fight America.” See also Al Qaeda’s statement of 24 April 2002: “It is allowed for Muslims to kill protected ones among unbelievers as an act of reciprocity. If the unbelievers have targeted Muslim women, children and elderly, it is permissible for Muslims to respond in kind and kill those similar to those whom the unbelievers killed” (quoted in Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, “Killing in the Name of Islam,” p. 87).

71. Quoted in Marcel Hénaff, “Global Terror, Global Vengeance?” *SubStance* 115, 37, (1) (2008), p. 73, emphasis added.

72. See Kepel and Milelli (eds.), *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, p. 72, emphasis added.

73. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

74. See Hénaff, “Global Terror, Global Vengeance?” p. 73; and Stephen Holmes, “Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001,” pp. 163–166.

75. See C. A. J. Coady, “Terrorism and Innocence,” *The Journal of Ethics* 8 (2004), p. 43. Synonymous terms are “non-utilitarian,” “absolutist,” and “deontological.” Intrinsicists believe that actions should be judged exclusively in terms of their internal properties or characteristics, and not on the basis of the consequences that their performance can be expected to bring about. Thus for the intrinsicist, the rightness or wrongness of an act lies in the kind of act it is, and not in the kind of things it makes happen (see Robert Young, “Political Terrorism as Weapon of the Politically Powerless,” in *Terrorism: The Philosophical Issues*, pp. 60–61). For a helpful discussion of utilitarianism and deontology and how they inform the ideologies of different terrorist groups, see Garrett O’Boyle, “Theories of Justification and Political Violence: Examples from Four Groups,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14(2) (2002), pp. 23–46.

76. Terrorizing the innocent, bin Laden says, is “unjust” and “reprehensible,” whereas “terrorizing oppressors and criminals and thieves and robbers is necessary for the safety of people and for

the protection of their property” and thus “commendable” (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/who/interview.html> (accessed 30 December 2008)). Al-Zawahiri is also careful to insist that Al Qaeda is opposed to the killing of innocents. Lawrence Wright describes a fascinating exchange between al-Zawahiri and an anonymous questioner in an online forum organized by al-Zawahiri. This is the questioner: “Excuse me, Mr. Zawahiri, but who is it who is killing, with Your Excellency’s permission, the innocents in Baghdad, Morocco, and Algeria? Do you consider the killing of women and children to be jihad?” Reports Wright: ‘Zawahiri protested that Al Qaeda had not killed innocents. “In fact, we fight those who kill innocents. Those who kill innocents are the Americans, the Jews, the Russians, and the French and their agents”’ (Wright, “The Rebellion Within”). Quintan Wiktorowicz writes that given “the vast religious evidence from the Qur’an and Sunna emphasizing the sanctity of life and limiting attacks against noncombatants,” Al Qaeda “could hardly argue against noncombatant immunity” (Wiktorowicz, “A Genealogy of Radical Islam,” p. 87).

77. See Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, “Killing in the Name of Islam,” pp. 86, 88–89; and Wiktorowicz, “A Genealogy of Radical Islam,” pp. 91–92, 93.

78. This echoes Frantz Fanon’s justification for terrorism, which holds that *any* member of the oppressor group can be legitimately attacked, however minuscule their role in the system of oppression (see Pavković, “Towards Liberation,” pp. 59–61).

79. Quoted in Christopher Blanchard, “Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology,” *CRS Report for Congress*, 20 June (2005), p. 4. Available at [http://images.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050622/alqaeda\\_crs.pdf](http://images.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050622/alqaeda_crs.pdf) (accessed 14 August 2008); see also Hamid Mir’s interview with bin Laden, published in *Dawn* on 10 November 2001. Available at <http://www.dawn.com/2001/11/10/top1.htm> (accessed 28 December 2008).

80. See <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/who/interview.html> (accessed 30 December 2008)

81. This is how the *jihadis* who tried to bomb the Tiger Tiger nightclub in London on ladies’ night referred to the club’s female patrons (see Nico Hines, “Tiger Tiger: The Bar under Threat,” *Times Online*, 29 June 2007. Available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article2005442.ece> (accessed 30 December 2008)).

82. Harold Garfinkel, “Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies,” *American Journal of Sociology* 61 (1956), p. 421.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 423.

84. Kelman, “Violence without Moral Restraint,” pp. 48–52.

85. See Kepele and Milelli (eds.), *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, p. 55, emphasis added.

86. In *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Mark Juergensmeyer makes reference to a “shy young man who grinned into the video-camera the day before he was to become a martyr in a Hamas suicide operation” (p. 219). The martyr, Juergensmeyer reports, proclaimed “that he was ‘doing this for Allah.’” This prompts Juergensmeyer to observe that “one of the remarkable facts about those who have committed acts of terrorism in the contemporary world” is that “they would do virtually anything if they thought it had been sanctioned by divine mandate.”

87. John Updike, *Terrorist* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2006), p. 243.

88. See Wiktorowicz, “A Genealogy of Radical Islam,” p. 89.

89. Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), p. 3.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

91. See Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke (eds.), *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending* (New York: Springer, 1986).

92. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

94. *Ibid.*, quoted on p. 189. Not only had Van Gogh directed Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s controversial movie *Submission*, in which Islamic attitudes toward women are heavily criticized; he had also made a number of scandalous comments about Islam and the Prophet Mohammed.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 209.



97. Rudolph Peters, "Dutch Extremist Islamism: Van Gogh's Murderer and His Ideas," in Rik Coolsaet, ed., *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 115–128.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*, p. 122, emphasis added.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 123, emphasis added.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
104. *Words are also deeds*: John L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).
105. Tariq Ali, "The Price of Occupation," *The Guardian*, 8 July 2005. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/jul/08/terrorism.july72> (accessed 28 December 2008)
106. Lawrence Wright, "The Master Plan," *The New Yorker*, 11 September 2006. Available at [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/09/11/060911fa\\_fact3](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/09/11/060911fa_fact3) (accessed 28 December 2008). See also Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, pp. 51–52.
107. Wright, "The Master Plan."
108. O'Brien, "Thinking about Terrorism."
109. Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement," p. 169.
110. *Ibid.*
111. See especially Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 190–218; and Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), pp. 32–62.
112. See Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat* (London: John Murray), pp. 246–249.
113. See, for example, Rohan Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda's Ideology," in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani and Eric Brown, eds., *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 1 (Washington: Hudson Institute, 2005), pp. 65–66; and Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom," pp. 76–78.
114. Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 156.
115. See especially Holmes, "Al-Qaeda, September 11, 2001," p. 169: In order for despair to become "politically effective" it must be interpreted through "a narrative of blame."
116. For a representative sample of these rulings, see Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam," pp. 86–87.
117. See especially Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom," p. 77.
118. Marc Sageman advocates the creation of an "international anti-defamation league" to monitor, publicly repudiate, and punish the *jihadi* (and other) purveyors of hate speech (*Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 182).
119. For an absorbing account of how the leadership of the Egyptian groups Al Jihad and the Islamic Group came to renounce terrorism as a political tactic, see Wright, "The Rebellion Within." On the wider revolt within the *jihadist* movement against Al Qaeda, see Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling," *The New Republic*, 11 June 2008. Available at <http://www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=702bf6d5-a37a-4e3e-a491-fd72bf6a9da1> (accessed 30 December 2008)
120. See, notably, Ed Hussain, *The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I Saw Inside, and Why I Left* (London: Penguin, 2007); and Hassan Butt and Shiv Malik, *Leaving Al-Qaeda* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2008).